

Design Review Board Fiscal Year 2002

Education & Outreach

In FY 02, the Design Review Board worked to increase its efforts at public design education and outreach, partly in response to the important ongoing comprehensive planning project for Amherst. The need to highlight design considerations in community planning was apparent, as both public and private development projects were very visible in town throughout the year.

Boltwood Walk Development – The DRB crafted a set of general design guidelines for future development around the periphery of the parking garage facility. Using models and illustrations, the DRB held a workshop for Boltwood Walk businesses and property owners to explore different intensities of potential development in the area.

Public Design Tours – During the spring of 2002, in anticipation of increased comprehensive planning efforts by the Town, the DRB developed and conducted three tours that examined important public design issues at a number of village centers and critical sites in Amherst. The tours were attended by members of several Town boards as well as interested citizens. The DRB will be selecting one or more of these sites for special attention.

Public Projects

Downtown Streetscape Improvements — Phase I

Both design and construction were completed on the first stretch of downtown Amherst sidewalks; these will provide handicapped accessibility and streetscape improvements for the first time in nearly 30 years. The sidewalk along the west side of North Pleasant Street between the driveway of the St. Brigid's parsonage and Hallock Street was rebuilt with a pattern of pedestrian paving, sidewalk "bump-outs" to shorten crossing distances, new benches and trash receptacles, bicycle parking, new plantings and tree wells. Preliminary design was begun for Phase II, which includes the opposite side of North Pleasant Street and the north end of Boltwood Walk.

Boltwood Walk Parking Garage — Construction Begins!

FY 02 saw construction begin on the long-awaited Boltwood Walk parking garage. It was immensely gratifying to watch the garage and pedestrian area design — one the DRB and so many of Amherst's citizens and committees had worked on — become a physical reality. As previously mentioned, in anticipation

of improvements by owners of private property surrounding the new facility, the DRB developed a set of general design guidelines for new development in the area and held a workshop for Boltwood Walk businesses and property owners. Using models and plans, the DRB illustrated a range of new development possibilities and discussed how the separate designs of individual new buildings and sites could most usefully interact with one another. One application for a new building in this area was reviewed during FY 02, and the DRB looks forward to working with property owners and the Town as the area around the new facility becomes a more active and vibrant part of downtown Amherst.



Main/Lessey/Boltwood Walk Intersection Improvements

Spurred by the garage project, a 30-year old urban renewal project design to improve this intersection and the west end of Sweetser Park was brought up to date and made consistent with the new Downtown Streetscape Improvement guidelines. Construction is slated to begin in the summer of 2002.



Spring Street Parking Lot

The DRB helped the Town develop a new alignment for parking in this Town Common parking lot, following removal of a temporary central row of parking spaces.

Private Projects



La Galleria

The DRB reviewed preliminary plans for this first new building proposal for a property facing onto the Boltwood Walk parking facility. The building in question would be an addition on the rear of The Monkey Bar building.



Peoples Bank

Together with the Planning Board and Amherst Historical Commission, the DRB helped to significantly reshape the design of a new downtown bank building at the corner of Amity and South Prospect Streets, converting the original proposal of a suburban mall-type building into a masonry building appropriate for its downtown setting. Located at the western entrance to downtown Amherst, and at the intersection of two National Historic Register Districts, it was important that a new building on this site be well designed. Although the final design increased the cost of the proposed building by \$200,000-\$300,000 beyond the cost of its standard suburban design, the bank itself was pleased with the result. Peoples Bank President Joseph LoBello noted, "The building will look like a downtown office facility, as opposed to normal branch-bank style."

Smaller private projects included a vestibule improvement by the Men's Resource Center, an addition connecting two existing buildings undertaken by the Black Sheep Deli, and 2nd and 3rd floor façade improvements for Pasta E Basta in the unusual *art moderne*-style Marsh Block on Main Street.

Signs

As usual, the review of new downtown sign designs dominated the DRB's workload during FY 02. Additionally, the Planning Board requested the DRB's assistance in reviewing the design of two signs proposed for new professional offices at Newmarket Center on University Drive.

Downtown sign reviews included: The Thirsty Mind Café, Tai Chi Center, The Loose Goose (deli), The Sub (awning sign), Amherst Computerworks, Delano's, the Foundation for Fiber Art, The Synthesis Center, Paradise of India (awning sign), Kamins Real Estate, The Black Sheep Deli (new awning signs), Banknorth, Silverscape Designs, Gallery A, Bart's Homemade (new awning and "tavern" signs), Primo Pizza Too, Amherst Family Practice, Blue Sky Contemporary Crafts, Amherst Barbers (new location), Kocot Salon, The Footwear Den (awning sign), and STA Travel.

David Dillon
Chair